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**Sustainable development: Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind**

**Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa**

**Convention on Biological Diversity**

# Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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# I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Marrakech, Morocco, 2015

## A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 71/228, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session, through the Secretary-General, on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The present report has been prepared in response to that invitation.

## B. Outcomes of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties, the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

### 1. Summary

2. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 15 to 18 November 2016 and comprised the following sessions:

(a) Twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties;

(b) Twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;

(c) Forty-fifth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation;

(d) Forty-fifth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice;

(e) Second part of the first session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement.

3. The Marrakech Conference enjoyed a high level of participation and was attended by 15,885 government delegates from 194 parties to the Convention; representatives of 1 observer State; 5,475 observers from 51 bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, including programmes, convention secretariats, specialized agencies and institutions, and related organizations; and 1,204 media representatives.

4. It delivered significant results across all bodies: the Conference of the Parties adopted 25 decisions, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted 8 decisions and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement adopted 2 decisions.

5. The decisions adopted and announcements made during the Conference related to a range of issues, including climate finance, adaptation, capacity-building, technology, gender-responsiveness, indigenous people, and the work programme under the Paris Agreement.

6. On climate finance, more than $81 million was pledged to the Adaptation Fund, surpassing the Fund's target for the year. Pledges totalling more than $23 million were made to the Climate Technology Centre and Network, which

provides support to developing countries for climate technology development and transfer. As the implementation arm of the Technology Mechanism, the Climate Technology Centre and Network is a key institution providing assistance to nations in realizing their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

7. A new five-year framework was agreed under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts, which addresses the impacts of climate change that are not addressed through planned adaptation, including displacement, migration and human mobility and comprehensive risk management.

8. On capacity-building, parties adopted a decision on the terms of reference of the Paris Committee on Capacity-building. With regard to the Paris Agreement, the Committee will help to address gaps and needs, both current and emerging, in implementing capacity-building in developing country parties and further enhancing capacity-building efforts, including with regard to coherence and coordination in capacity-building activities under the Convention.

9. An important step was taken in the area of advancing gender balance and achieving a gender-responsive climate policy through an agreement to extend the gender work programme to include civil society, businesses and other entities.

10. Governments also initiated work towards operationalizing the local communities and indigenous people's platform established at the twenty-first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The platform marks a new era in addressing the concerns and needs of indigenous peoples in the climate process and, once operational, it will allow for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation, adaptation and other climate actions.

### 2. High-level segment

11. The joint high-level segment of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties, twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving at the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement was opened by the President of the Conference of the Parties.

12. King Mohammed VI of Morocco, the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and other dignitaries delivered statements, in which they welcomed the early entry into force on 4 November 2016 of the Paris Agreement and recognized the need to take decisive steps to achieve its full implementation.

13. The Secretary-General also highlighted the need for countries to continue the spirit of collaboration that had led to the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other important multilateral frameworks agreed in 2015. He similarly reiterated the need for leadership by Heads of State and Governments and other stakeholders, and for the engagement of society as a whole in addressing climate change. Furthermore, he underpinned the importance of advancing scientific understanding as a basis for increasing ambition with regard to attaining the goals of the Paris Agreement and called on developed countries to honour their commitment to mobilize climate finance to support the actions of developing countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change vulnerabilities.

14. During the high-level segment, 166 statements were delivered, of which 34 were by Heads of State, 15 by Heads of Government, 4 by Vice-Presidents, 1 by a Deputy Prime Minister, 6 by ministers for foreign affairs and 106 by ministers of the environment, other ministers and heads of delegation. Statements were also made by representatives of nine observer constituencies: indigenous peoples, trade unions, women and gender, youth, business and industry, the environment, research

and independent non-governmental organizations, and local government and municipal authorities.

15. The Government of Morocco presented the Marrakech Action Proclamation for our Climate and Sustainable Development, which was supported by all parties participating in the Conference. The Proclamation reflects the renewed political momentum towards a new era of implementation and action on climate change and sustainable development by Governments, businesses, investors, subregional governments and cities. It calls for the highest political commitment to build on that momentum so that action to address climate change fully supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit of all people and the planet.

16. Two high-level events were convened during the Marrakech Conference: a ministerial dialogue on climate finance, at which multi-stakeholder approaches to mobilization and delivery of adaptation finance were considered, and an event on accelerating action to address climate change. The latter event provided an opportunity to bolster high-level engagement on implementation; announce new or enhanced voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions and report on their progress; and further engage dignitaries of parties, international organizations, international cooperative initiatives and non-party stakeholders.

17. The high-level climate champions, Ambassador Laurence Tubiana of France and Minister Delegate Hakima El Haite of Morocco, launched the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, a framework designed to catalyse and support climate action by parties and non-party stakeholders in the period 2017-2020, giving effect to the existing arrangements as agreed by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-first session in Paris.

### 3. Outcomes of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties

18. The following decisions were adopted by the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties:

(a) 1/CP.22: Preparations for the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement;

(b) 2/CP.22: Paris Committee on Capacity-building;

(c) 3/CP.22: Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts;

(d) 4/CP.22: Review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts;

(e) 5/CP.22: Review and report of the Adaptation Committee;

(f) 6/CP.22: National adaptation plans;

(g) 7/CP.22: Long-term climate finance;

(h) 8/CP.22: Report of the Standing Committee on Finance;

(i) 9/CP.22: Terms of reference for the review of the functions of the Standing Committee on Finance;

(j) 10/CP.22: Report of the Green Climate Fund to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Green Climate Fund;

(k) 11/CP.22: Report of the Global Environment Facility to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Global Environment Facility;

(l) 12/CP.22: Sixth review of the Financial Mechanism;

(m) 13/CP.22: Initiation of a process to identify the information to be provided by parties in accordance with article 9, paragraph 5, of the Paris Agreement;

(n) 14/CP.22: Linkages between the Technology Mechanism and the Financial Mechanism of the Convention;

(o) 15/CP.22: Enhancing climate technology development and transfer through the Technology Mechanism;

(p) 16/CP.22: Third comprehensive review of the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in developing countries under the Convention;

(q) 17/CP.22: Improving the effectiveness of the Doha work programme on article 6 of the Convention;

(r) 18/CP.22: Outcome of the first round of the international assessment and review process (2014-2015);

(s) 19/CP.22: Implementation of the global observing system for climate;

(t) 20/CP.22: Work of the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention;

(u) 21/CP.22: Gender and climate change;

(v) 22/CP.22: Financial and budgetary matters;

(w) 23/CP.22: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;

(x) 24/CP.22: Dates and venues of future sessions;

(y) 25/CP.22: Rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

### 4. Outcomes of the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

19. The following decisions were adopted by the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol:

(a) 1/CMP.12: Third Review of the Adaptation Fund;

(b) 2/CMP.12: Report of the Adaptation Fund Board;

(c) 3/CMP.12: Guidance relating to the clean development mechanism;

(d) 4/CMP.12: Guidance on the implementation of article 6 of the Kyoto Protocol;

(e) 5/CMP.12: Review of the joint implementation guidelines;

(f) 6/CMP.12: Third comprehensive review of the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in developing countries under the Kyoto Protocol;

(g) 7/CMP.12: Financial and budgetary matters;

(h) 8/CMP.12: Administrative, financial and institutional matters.

### 5. Outcomes of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

20. The following decisions were adopted by the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement:

(a) 1/CMA.1: Matters relating to the implementation of the Paris Agreement;

(b) 2/CMA.1: Rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

### 6. Conclusions and recommendations

21. The General Assembly may wish, inter alia:

(a) To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary-General;

(b) To note the outcomes of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties, twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, hosted by the Government of Morocco from 15 to 18 November 2016;

(c) To urge parties to the Paris Agreement that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible in order to ensure its universality;

(d) To urge parties to deposit their instruments of acceptance in order to ensure the prompt entry into force of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol;

(e) To urge parties to conclude the work programme under the Paris Agreement as soon as possible and to forward the outcomes in advance of the third part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, to be convened in conjunction with the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties in Poland in 2018, for its consideration and adoption; and to invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference of the Parties, Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

## II. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/229 on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

### A. Introduction

22. In its resolution 71/229, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report constitutes an update for the Assembly on the principal activities that have been undertaken in that respect.

### B. Preparations for the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies

23. Following the acceptance of the generous offer of the Government of China to host the thirteenth Conference of the Parties, the Conference will be held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017.

24. The Conference will be divided into three segments: an initial segment, a high-level segment and a segment comprising meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the

Conference of the Parties, namely, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Committee on Science and Technology.

25. In accordance with decision 34/COP.12, interactive dialogue sessions among ministers and other high-ranking officials will be organized on 11 and 12 September 2017 on the occasion of the high-level segment. Three parallel ministerial/high-level round-table discussions will be held on the following themes: "Land degradation: a challenge to development, prosperity and peace"; "Drought and sand and dust storms: early warning and beyond"; and "Land degradation neutrality: from targets to action — what will it take?". Three interactive plenary segments will be held thereafter on the following issues: gender and land rights (a dialogue with civil society); how local governments can help to address the challenges of land degradation (a dialogue with elected and local government representatives); and how private sector investment can help to achieve land degradation neutrality (a dialogue with the private sector).

26. The sixteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention will address matters such as the effective implementation of the Convention at the national, subregional and regional levels and the reporting and review process of the Convention with regard to the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets into the implementation of the Convention.

27. The programme of work of the thirteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology will include items resulting from the work programme of the science-policy interface mechanism for the biennium 2016-2017; a review of the interface mechanism, including the proposed work programme for the next biennium in that regard, and a review of its achievements; and promotion of the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of best practices and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Knowledge Hub.

28. Consultations on the regional implementation annexes of affected country parties in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe will be held in advance of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, in Ordos on 4 and 5 September 2017.

## C. Follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

### 1. Partnerships on land degradation neutrality (Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3)

29. In order to follow up on the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention secretariat continued to work with the Statistics Division of the Secretariat and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to upgrade the status of indicator 15.3.1 (Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area), which had been adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session.

30. The secretariat continued to work closely with key partners, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as part of an inter-agency advisory group on indicator 15.3.1, to revise the metadata document and develop guidance on good practices with regard to country implementation and to ensure national ownership. In addition, storylines on land degradation were being provided for the annual global report on progress regarding implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Under the auspices of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, the secretariat has continued to help countries to build national capacity for implementing and monitoring target 15.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 15, including national target-setting.

### 2. Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme

31. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the twelfth session of the Conference of Parties endorsed Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3 as a "strong vehicle" for driving the implementation of the Convention and invited all parties to formulate voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality.

32. In order to support parties in translating the decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties into action at the country level, the science-policy interface mechanism developed the land degradation neutrality conceptual framework, providing a sound scientific basis for understanding land degradation neutrality and developing practical guidelines for implementing and monitoring national processes to achieve it.

33. Furthermore, the secretariat of the Convention and its Global Mechanism, with the support of 17 international partners, established the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme. The Programme is aimed at assisting countries in formulating national voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality by providing practical tools and guidance for the establishment of national targets, and accelerating the implementation of transformative programmes and projects with positive changes. The Programme supports countries in:

(a) Leveraging land degradation neutrality by catalysing its multiple benefits and bringing it to the forefront of national agendas on, inter alia, climate change, restoration, green growth and poverty eradication;

(b) Assessing land degradation neutrality by establishing a baseline and identifying drivers of and trends in degradation;

(c) Setting land degradation neutrality targets and associated measures by defining the country's ambitions in terms of combating land degradation;

(d) Achieving land degradation neutrality by identifying transformative programmes and projects that can contribute to multiple Sustainable Development Goals and embedding land degradation neutrality into national development priorities.

34. At the global level, the Programme facilitates technical support, knowledge-sharing and cooperation through peer learning among countries, global analysis, advocacy, and partnerships.

35. In its decision 3/COP.12, the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth session invited parties to use the monitoring and evaluation approach that had been adopted in decision 22/COP.11 in order to monitor, evaluate and communicate progress towards achieving the land degradation neutrality target. In response, the Programme supports parties in setting baselines and targets by providing geospatial data on three biophysical indicators: land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks above and below ground (with soil organic carbon as the metric). The indicators are also subindicators of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 15.3.1.

36. By 13 June 2017, 110 countries had made a commitment to setting national land degradation neutrality targets, providing an important opportunity to foster coherence within national policies, actions and commitments; move from pilot project towards implementation; and create blended finance packages to finance the transition towards land degradation neutrality.

### 3. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund: an innovative approach

37. The development of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund has advanced substantially since the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties. Following

the competitive selection of a private sector structuring partner, a memorandum of understanding was established in December 2015 between the Convention's Global Mechanism and Mirova, the responsible investment subsidiary of Natixis Asset Management. Both parties made commitments to co-develop the Fund and provide financial resources for this undertaking. Additional financial support for the development of the Fund was provided by the Governments of France, Luxembourg and Norway and by the Rockefeller Foundation. Throughout the development of the Fund, partnerships and collaborations were established with public financial institutions, private sector institutional investors, NGOs, financial intermediaries, other investment funds and project promoters.

## 4. High-level political forum on sustainable development: review of Sustainable Development Goal 15

38. In 2018, the high-level political forum on sustainable development, whose overall theme will be "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", will review a set of Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 15. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification plans to conduct a number of regional consultations in order to contribute more effectively to the forum and its review of Goal 15. Other activities will also be organized by the secretariat throughout 2018 to help to raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders participating in the forum. Target 15.3, on land degradation neutrality, will be reviewed, and Member States will be updated on progress made in its implementation, including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme and the creation of the innovative funding under the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, both of which are major developments.

## 5. Policies on drought

39. There is an urgent need to establish early warning systems for timely drought detection and preparedness. Such early warning systems have the potential to help to trigger action early within a drought plan. They can be used to assess vulnerability and prepare targeted mitigation actions. Monitoring and early warning also provide the foundation on which timely decisions can be made by policymakers and stakeholders at all levels.

40. The Convention supports countries by advocating three important pillars on drought preparedness:

(a) Early warning systems: declaring a drought too late can have a devastating impact on lives and livelihood. The point at which a drought is declared, however, can often be very subjective and highly political. Early warning systems guide affected countries through the provision of timely information that can be used to reduce risks and to better prepare for an effective response;

(b) Vulnerability and risk assessment: no amount of early warning will work without action to protect the most vulnerable. Some people and systems are more vulnerable than others to drought as a result of social, economic, and environmental factors. It is important to combine better forecasts with detailed knowledge on how landscapes and societies respond to a lack of rain, and to turn that knowledge into early intervention; and

(c) Drought risk mitigation measures: proactive drought risk management can save the lives and the livelihoods of millions of people. For example, the development of sustainable irrigation schemes for crops and livestock or water harvesting schemes can boost the recycling and reuse of water, explore the cultivation of more drought-tolerant crops, expand crop insurance schemes and establish alternative livelihoods that can provide income in drought-prone areas.

## D. Global celebration of World Day to Combat Desertification and outreach activities

41. In 2017, the global observance of World Day to Combat Desertification was held in Ouagadougou on 15 June. Over 400 international and local participants attended the ceremonies, including three Heads of State, several ministers, eminent personalities, and representatives of intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations. Ministers and government officials at a high-level symposium issued a call for action on land-based jobs to tackle Africa's three greatest interlinked challenges, namely, security, stability and sustainability, through the Security, Stability and Sustainability Initiative. The call for action was endorsed by the Presidents of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger in a joint statement made during the closing ceremony.

## E. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

42. Collaboration with the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility continued to strengthen during the period under review, with the Convention secretariat attending the consultations on the seventh replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. At the 52nd Council meeting, held in May 2017, the Independent Evaluation Office of the Facility presented a land degradation focal area study, covering the Facility's grant-funding activities in agricultural lands, rangelands, degraded productive lands and desert lands, and with regard to combating deforestation and desertification. The purpose of the study was to inform the Global Environment Facility's seventh replenishment process by evaluating its land degradation focal area on the basis of evidence gathered. The study included an analysis of the value for money of the focal area's projects in order to understand the efficiency of the Facility's investments in the area of land degradation. It was highlighted in the study that, by investing more resources in land, the Facility could help to achieve multiple goals and deliver benefits in a more strategic and effective manner, and see a higher return on its investment.

## F. Science-policy interface mechanism

43. When it met in April 2017, the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology revised and endorsed the preliminary agenda of the Committee's thirteenth session. The Bureau also discussed how best to organize the session so as to facilitate dialogue between the parties, the science-policy interface mechanism and other invited panellists on the policy implications of scientific outputs and to formulate policy-relevant recommendations.

44. Also in April 2017, the science-policy interface mechanism, established by the Conference of the Parties in its decision 23/COP.11, discussed the current status of and process for finalizing its work programme for the period 2016-2017. The work programme contained three major objectives and four coordination areas. The objectives were to provide scientific guidance for the operationalization of the voluntary land degradation neutrality target; highlight the science-based synergistic potential of sustainable land management practices to address desertification/land degradation and drought, climate change mitigation and adaptation; and to encourage the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands. As requested by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth session, the science-policy interface mechanism will present, at the thirteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology, a synthesis report, including policy-oriented recommendations, for

each objective in its work programme, and a report on the coordination activities conducted during the biennium 2016-2017 with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils of the Global Soil Partnership and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

### G. Observations and recommendations

45. All life on earth depends on access to healthy and productive land, but some 12 million hectares are lost each year to degradation processes. Achieving the overarching goals for sustainable development is unrealistic if such land degradation is not halted and reversed. The successful implementation of target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality can connect the dots between many goals and targets and thus deliver many co-benefits, from biodiversity conservation and combating climate change to ensuring economic growth and human well-being. Achieving land degradation neutrality will serve as an accelerator for the implementation of other Sustainable Development Goals, as already acknowledged by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/229. In this regard, it is significant that 110 Member States have already subscribed to the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme.

46. The General Assembly may wish to continue calling for further investment aimed at making the Programme operational and acknowledging the importance of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund as an innovative funding scheme for financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Assembly may also wish to call on the Global Environment Facility to increase the financial resources allocated to its Land Degradation Focal Area during the ongoing seventh replenishment process, which is due to conclude by June 2018.

47. Droughts and dust and sand storms are increasing in both frequency and intensity. The General Assembly may wish to call on Member States to prepare drought preparedness policies, with a focus on early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessments, and drought risk mitigation measures.

## III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

### A. Introduction

48. In its resolution 71/230, the General Assembly invited the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the resolution, including the outcome of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and difficulties encountered in the process of their implementation. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

49. At the time of writing, the status of ratifications to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols was as follows: 196 States and 1 regional economic integration organization had deposited instruments of ratification to the Convention on Biological Diversity; 171 parties to the Convention had deposited their instruments of ratification to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; 39 parties to the Cartagena Protocol had deposited their instruments of ratification to the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the

Cartagena Protocol;[1] and 100 parties to the Convention had deposited their instruments of ratification to the Nagoya Protocol.

50. The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was held in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December 2016. The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization were held concurrently.

## B. Outcomes of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

51. The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity[2] adopted 33 decisions, including on:

(a) Assessing progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and towards achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including with regard to updating and implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans (see section F below);

(b) Mainstreaming biodiversity within and across sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism;

(c) Providing guidance on ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change and interlinkages between biodiversity and human health; invasive alien species (including the use of biological control agents and addressing the risks associated with trade); climate-related geoengineering; sustainable wildlife management; pollinators, pollination and food production; and digital sequencing of information on genetic resources and synthetic biology;

(d) Adopting a short-term ecosystem restoration plan;

(e) Welcoming the decision of the Economic and Social Council on the international arrangement on forests and inviting members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to consider ways to further advance the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(f) Addressing the impacts of marine debris and underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity and biodiversity in cold waters and describing additional ecologically or biologically significant marine areas;

(g) Adopting voluntary guidelines on ensuring the consent of indigenous peoples and local communities with regard to accessing traditional knowledge and on advancing work on a glossary of terms and best practices for the repatriation of traditional knowledge;

(h) Reviewing progress in resource mobilization and urging parties to increase their efforts to achieve the targets;

(i) Adopting strategic guidance for the next four-year replenishment period of its financial mechanism, the Global Environment Facility, and taking note of an assessment of financial needs undertaken to inform the seventh replenishment process;

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[1] The supplementary protocol has not yet entered into force; 40 parties to the Cartagena Protocol must submit an instrument of ratification or accession before it can enter into force.

[2] Further information is available from www.cbd.int/conferences/2016.

(j) Agreeing on an action plan for the period 2017-2020 to support and enhance capacity-building for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, on the basis of the needs of parties, with a focus on strengthening the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(k) Recognizing the need for a comprehensive and participatory process to develop proposals for the follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, namely, a post-2020 biodiversity framework, and requesting the Executive Secretary to prepare a proposal to that end;

(l) Agreeing to hold the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties in Egypt, the fifteenth in China and the sixteenth in Turkey.

## C. Outcomes of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

52. The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety adopted 19 decisions, including on:

(a) Assessing and reviewing the effectiveness of the Protocol and, accordingly, setting priorities for operational objectives on biosafety legislation, risk assessment, risk management, the detection and identification of living modified organisms, and public awareness, education and training;

(b) Reviewing the status of implementation of the Framework and Action Plan for Capacity-building for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2012-2020), and maintaining the Framework as adopted;

(c) Adopting operational definitions of unintentional transboundary movements and illegal transboundary movements of living modified organisms;

(d) Taking note of the document entitled "Guidance on risk assessment of living modified organisms", extending the online forum on risk assessment and risk management and requesting the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to recommend a way forward with regard to addressing the needs, priorities and gaps identified by parties;

(e) Requesting parties to make available to the Biosafety Clearing-House information on the transit and contained use of living modified organisms;

(f) Extending the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation in the safe transfer and handling of living modified organisms until 2020 and prioritizing activities under that programme of work;

(g) Extending the mandate of the expert group on socioeconomic considerations.

## D. Outcomes of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

53. The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and

Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization adopted 14 decisions that addressed three key areas:

(a) Supporting the ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, including decisions on capacity-building and on the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House;

(b) Progress in implementation and compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, including decisions on assessment, review and compliance;

(c) Further policy development, including decisions on the need for and modalities of a global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism, and digital sequence information on genetic resources.

54. The respective meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meetings of the Parties to both the Nagoya and Cartagena Protocols decided to use the term "indigenous peoples and local communities" in their decisions and official documents, noting that such a change in wording did not affect the obligations of the parties or the legal interpretation of the Protocols.

## E. High-level segment and other events associated with the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

55. The high-level segment of the Conference was convened on 2 and 3 December 2016 and was attended by over 167 ministers and high-level representatives. The high-level segment adopted the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being, which focuses on integrating biodiversity into key economic sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism, in order to achieve global biodiversity targets. Ministers expressed their commitment to taking urgent action to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

56. During the high-level segment, several parties announced commitments in a variety of areas, including to protect coral reefs and their ecosystems; support capacity-building activities in developing countries; increase control over invasive alien species; develop species management plans for high-value plant species; cultivate indigenous biological resources; and encourage community participation in product development. At a ministerial-level meeting, the 20 like-minded mega-diverse countries[3] adopted a charter to achieve Aichi Target 11 by 2020, which was subsequently welcomed by the Conference of the Parties.

57. A number of other informal events were convened on the margins of the Conference aimed at engaging a range of stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention. The events included:

(a) 2016 forum on business and biodiversity: over 250 experts from businesses, Governments and NGOs participated in the forum, which focused on the mainstreaming of biodiversity within the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism sectors from the perspective of business. Other issues addressed included natural capital accounting and financing; examining links between climate change and biodiversity; and supply chain policies. One of the outcomes of the forum was a business and biodiversity pledge, signed by over 103 major businesses;

[3] Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, South Africa and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Ethiopia was welcomed as a new member of the group.

(b) Forum of international legislators: practical strategies and commitments were discussed with regard to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the legislators pledged to hold Governments accountable for implementation of the commitments;

(c) Third forum on science for biodiversity: the forum was convened on the theme "Mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being: contributions from science". Its objective was to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and solutions among scientists, decision makers and civil society in order to integrate cross-sectoral biodiversity, in particular on the agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism sectors;

(d) Múuch'tambal summit on indigenous experience — traditional knowledge, biological and cultural diversity: the summit focused on the contributions of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The declaration adopted at the summit included recommendations on measures that could be undertaken at the local, national and international levels to strengthen the links between biological and cultural diversity for a sustainable future;

(e) Civil society and youth alliances for mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being: the theme of the civil society forum, attended by 148 organizations was "Biodiversity integration for welfare in the agricultural, forestry, fisheries, tourism and urban sectors". At the youth forum, a number of recommendations and commitments were made to strengthen progress towards achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(f) Fifth global biodiversity summit of cities and subnational governments: representatives of 73 countries participated at the summit, which adopted the Quintana Roo communiqué on mainstreaming local and subnational action on biodiversity. A number of commitments were made by representatives of various local and city entities.

## F. Progress made and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and in the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

58. The Conference of the Parties undertook a further review of progress made in implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, on the basis of information contained in the fifth national reports received by parties on the status, trends and challenges related to biodiversity and of information on national biodiversity strategies and action plans. To date, 186 parties (95 per cent) have provided a fifth national report and 144 parties (73 per cent) have submitted national biodiversity strategies and action plans since 2010.

59. The Conference of the Parties noted that, while there had been significant progress towards the achievement of some elements of some of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the progress to date on most of the Targets was insufficient to ensure their achievement by 2020. The Conference therefore urged parties to intensify efforts aimed at achieving their national targets, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Parties were also encouraged, in accordance with national circumstances, priorities and capacities, to consider increasing the ambition and/or scope of the national or regional targets to a level that was commensurate with the Targets.

60. Limited capacities and resources to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 represented a major challenge, in particular for developing

countries. An increased focus on scientific and technical cooperation and continued attention to resource mobilization were identified as being necessary in order to support countries in addressing those challenges. Support from the international community and the United Nations system, by prioritizing biodiversity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, would be crucial for generating and sustaining the momentum required to fully implement the Strategic Plan and achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. A number of decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting, including in the areas of capacity-building, resource mobilization and the Global Environment Facility as the Convention's financial mechanism, provided for further action in that regard. There remained a need to elevate the profile of biodiversity and the Convention at the highest political levels.

## G. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

61. The Convention has promoted a number of activities aimed at following up the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which welcomed the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity as an important framework to promote the engagement of all stakeholders in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

62. Significant among those activities were the number of commemorative events that had been organized at the national level to mark the International Day for Biological Diversity, on 22 May 2017, on the theme "Biodiversity and sustainable tourism". The theme was chosen to coincide with the observance of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The various celebrations provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the important contribution made by sustainable tourism to economic growth and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

63. The Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting, welcomed the adoption of a framework for a communications strategy, prepared in the intersessional period, that would provide a flexible framework for guiding the actions and activities of the secretariat, parties and other organizations and stakeholders during the remaining years of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

64. In collaboration with other relevant organizations, the secretariat prepared a report on biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[4] which was launched at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The ways in which the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets contributed to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals were highlighted in the report.

65. The secretariat of and parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity participated actively in the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14,[5] convened from 5 to 9 June 2017. The Executive Secretary participated in the conference plenaries and partnership dialogues, highlighting the critical role of biodiversity in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14, among other Goals. The secretariat announced that voluntary commitments had been made with regard to a capacity-building platform for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals

[4] Available from //www.cbd.int/development/.

[5] See https://oceanconference.un.org/.

and to global dialogues with regional seas organizations and regional fisheries bodies on accelerating progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## H. Recommendations

66. The General Assembly, at its seventy-second session, may wish, inter alia:

(a) To take note of the outcomes of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the second Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, stressing the importance of their follow-up and implementation;

(b) To call upon States to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity in economic sectors and take note of the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being;

(c) To call upon all parties to accelerate and scale up efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, acknowledging the contribution of such efforts to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) To invite all States and relevant United Nations departments of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds, programmes of the United Nations system and the regional commissions to enhance their contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020;

(e) To reaffirm that the Conference of the Parties recognized the need for a comprehensive and participatory process to develop proposals for the follow up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and encourage States and all stakeholders to contribute to the development of the post-2020 global framework for biodiversity;

(f) To highlight the importance of raising high-level political engagement for the achievement of and follow-up to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and related goals and the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(g) To call upon all States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(h) To call upon all Parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Nagoya Protocol;

(i) To call upon all Parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and its Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress.